

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Review Item:

Performance-Based Credits Awarded Toward High School Graduation

Applicable Statute(s) or Regulation(s):

704 KAR 3:303 (Program of Studies for Kentucky Schools P-12), 704 KAR 3:305 (Minimum Requirements for High School Graduation)

History/Background:

Existing Policy. At the February 2006 Kentucky Board of Education meeting, the Board took final action on 704 KAR 3:305 that outlines the minimum requirements for high school graduation. Subsequently, at the April 2006 meeting, the Board took final action on 704 KAR 3:303 that incorporates *The Program of Studies for Kentucky Schools Primary-12 (2006)* by reference. (See Attachment A for further background). The *Program of Studies* outlines the minimum content standards required for all students for the required credits for high school graduation and the content standards for primary, intermediate, and middle level programs that lead up to the high school graduation requirements.

Both of these regulations include guidance on the awarding of high school credits. A high school graduation credit may be awarded in either of two ways: Carnegie units (defined as at least 120 hours of instructional time in one subject) or performance-based credits, defined at the local level regardless of the number of instructional hours. Districts and schools are accountable for making sure that each student's education program includes the minimum content standards as specified in the *Program of Studies* and provides the student with the opportunity to learn the standards including appropriate supports based on the individual learning needs of a student.

The Kentucky Board of Education identifies the minimum credits required for graduation (704 KAR 3:305) and the local district sets the local requirements in their district graduation policy.

Performance-Based Credit

Performance-Based Credits refer to credits earned by a student outside of the traditional structure of a 120-hour instructional course. In order to award such credits, districts must establish a policy for a performance-based system that:

- provides procedures for developing and amending performance-based credit courses
- identifies related performance descriptors and assessments
- establishes grading and reporting procedures
- specifies content standards as addressed in Kentucky's *Program of Studies*
- identifies the extent to which end-of-course assessments will be used
- allows for students to demonstrate proficiency and earn credit for learning acquired outside of school or in prior learning experiences
- allows students to pursue internships, cooperative learning experiences and other learning experiences in the school and community

Performance-based credit may be awarded for these types of courses:

- course work that allows satisfactory demonstration of learning
- course work that constitutes satisfactory demonstration of learning in a course for which the student failed to earn credit when the course was previously taken
- standards-based portfolios, senior year or capstone projects
- standards-based online or other technology-mediated courses
- standards-based dual credit or other equivalency courses
- standards-based internship, cooperative learning experience or other supervised learning experience in the school and the community

As districts pursue implementation of new school programs and designs to expand learning options, the number of students earning performance-based credits is expected to increase. As an example, several districts are establishing early college high schools in partnership with local colleges and universities. Early college high schools are typically located on a college campus and the student earns both a high school diploma and an associates degree within five years. These new school models will be performance-based credit systems. Many dual credit classes are managed as performance-based. Also, to improve the quality of instruction in A5 and A6 programs, districts may need to pursue highly individualized performance-based credit models that focus on progression based on performance rather than seat-time.

Policy Issue(s):

Because districts and schools will have many questions about implementation of performance-based credit systems, the Kentucky School Boards Association, the Kentucky School Councils Association, district and school administrators and the Kentucky Department of Education have agreed to collaborate on a set of model policies. That work is underway and will be finalized in summer '07.

Impact on Getting to Proficiency:

The local option to award credits toward high school graduation through performance-based credits enables high school programs to build on rigorous and relevant learning experiences to prepare students for successful transition to life.

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